

(NOTE: IRVING BERLING BIRTHDAY: MAY 11)

"AMERICA'S GREATEST SONGWRITER"
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: TODAY, WE PAY TRIBUTE TO A MAN WHOSE SONGS HAVE BROUGHT JOY TO MILLIONS OF PEOPLE THE WORLD OVER FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY. OTHER COMPOSERS CALL HIM "AMERICA'S GREATEST SONGWRITER". THIS MAN OF MELODY IS IRVING BERLIN, WHO IS NINETY YEARS OLD TODAY -- AND STILL WRITING SONGS. YOUR HOST ON THIS SPECIAL PROGRAM WILL BE-----.

TAPE: CUT ONE "ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND" - EST. UP FULL, FADE & HOLD UNDER

VOICE: ONE OF THE QUESTIONS MOST OFTEN ASKED OF SONGWRITERS IS, "HOW MANY SONGS HAVE YOU WRITTEN?" IRVING BERLIN REPLIES: "USUALLY WHEN YOU ASK A SONGWRITER THAT, HE SAYS, 'THREE THOUSAND.' NOBODY WRITES THAT MANY, BUT I SUPPOSE I'VE HAD AT LEAST A THOUSAND PUBLISHED. THERE'S NEVER BEEN AN ACCURATE COUNT MADE."

THE MUSIC YOU ARE HEARING IS ONE OF HIS SONGS, AND ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS. "ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND". THE SHEET MUSIC ALONE SOLD MORE THAN A MILLION COPIES.

TAPE: UP FULL -- FADE OUT AS DESIRED. TOTAL CUT: 2:57

VOICE: IF ANYONE EVER PERSONIFIED THE RAGS-TO-RICHES FABLE OF AMERICA, IT WAS IRVING BERLIN, BORN ISRAEL BALINE ON THIS DATE (MAY 11) IN 1888, IN A SMALL RUSSIAN VILLAGE. HE WAS ONE OF EIGHT CHILDREN OF A JEWISH CANTOR.

VOICE:
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WHEN THE YOUNG BALINE WAS FIVE YEARS OLD, A POGROM DROVE THE FAMILY FROM THEIR HOME. LIKE COUNTLESS OTHER IMMIGRANTS THEY CAME TO AMERICA AND SETTLED IN NEW YORK'S LOWER EAST SIDE IN A PREDOMINANTLY JEWISH NEIGHBORHOOD. THREE YEARS LATER THE FATHER WAS DEAD, AND THE BOY WHO WOULD BECOME IRVING BERLIN ONLY STAYED WITH HIS MOTHER FOR A FEW MORE YEARS. THEN HE LEFT HOME TO TRY TO EARN A LIVING. HE DID NOT WANT TO BE A BURDEN TO HIS MOTHER.

IN NEW YORK CITY'S CHINATOWN, THE TEEN-AGE IRVING BERLIN -- FOR THAT WAS WHAT HE NOW CALLED HIMSELF -- TOOK A JOB AS A SINGING WAITER. HE DIDN'T SING WELL -- ALL HE HAD WAS A WILLING AMBITION -- AND HE BARELY EARNED A LIVING. THE PIANO PLAYER IN THE RESTAURANT WROTE A TUNE, AND KNOWING THAT YOUNG IRVING HAD A CERTAIN WAY WITH WORDS, ASKED HIM TO WRITE THE LYRIC. AND SO WAS BORN THE SONG TITLED "MARIE FROM SUNNY ITALY." IT WAS PUBLISHED IN 1907, AND THE PRINTED SHEET MUSIC BORE THE LEGEND, "WORDS BY IRVING BERLIN". HERE, IT WOULD BE NICE TO SAY THE SONG WAS A BIG HIT. IT WASN'T. IT EARNED A ROYALTY OF THIRTY-SEVEN CENTS. BUT IRVING BERLIN WAS NOW A SONGWRITER. TRUE, SO FAR HE WAS WRITING ONLY LYRICS, BUT HE WAS TEACHING HIMSELF TO PLAY THE PIANO -- PICKING OUT TUNES WITH TWO FINGERS. THEN HE STARTED COMPOSING HIS OWN MELODIES. HE NEVER DID LEARN TO READ MUSIC AND SOMEONE ELSE ALWAYS HAD TO WRITE DOWN THE SONGS FOR HIM. THIS WAS THE MAN OF WHOM HIS CLOSE FRIEND, THE LATE BING CROSBY, WOULD LATER SAY:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- CROSBY

"IN MY OPINION, IRVING'S ONE OF THE GREATEST SONG WRITERS WHO EVER LIVED, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT HE WROTE BOTH THE WORDS AND THE MUSIC, AND HE WROTE EVERY KIND OF A SONG. PATRIOTIC, BALLAD, RHYTHM, BLUES, COMIC SONGS, MATERIAL SONGS. YOU JUST CAN'T NAME A SONG THAT IRVING WASN'T CAPABLE OF WRITING, AND DID WRITE, SUCCESSFUL ONES. HE HAD SUCH LIMITLESS ZEAL AND DRIVE, ENTHUSIASM -- BOUNDLESS. VERY INSPIRATIONAL GUY TO BE AROUND, TO WORK WITH, BECAUSE HE NEVER GOT TIRED OF HIS WORK, AND NEVER GOT TIRED OF WHAT HE WAS DOING, OR THE (MOTION) PICTURE ITSELF, OR THE STORY. WHAT A MAN. IRVING BERLIN." (TWO-SECOND PAUSE - TAPE SEGUES TO MUSIC -- "BLUE SKIES" - TOTAL CUT 2:17 - MAY BE FADED OUT AS DESIRED) (MUSIC OPTIONAL)

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VOICE: BING CROSBY SINGING ONE OF IRVING BERLIN'S PERENNIAL STANDARDS -- "BLUE SKIES". / THE MUSIC CALLED "RAGTIME" WAS
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VERY POPULAR IN THOSE EARLY DAYS AND MOST OF BERLIN'S TUNES
WERE IN THAT VEIN. CALLED "NOVELTY" OR "COMIC" TUNES IN THE
MUSIC BUSINESS, THEY WERE ALL LIVELY AND OF AN EARTHY
VITALITY.

TAPE : CUT THREE -- SNEAK IN "WHEN I LOST YOU"

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VOICE: THEN, IN 1912, WHEN HIS FIRST WIFE, DOROTHY GOETZ, DIED ONLY
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FIVE MONTHS AFTER THEY WERE MARRIED, THE GRIEVING COMPOSER
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WROTE "WHEN I LOST YOU", REVEALING FOR THE FIRST TIME,
HIS NATURAL TALENT FOR LYRICAL BALLADS.

TAPE: MUSIC UP FULL - CAN BE FADED OUT AS DESIRED - TOTAL CUT 1:02

VOICE: IN 1917, AMERICA WAS AT WAR. LIKE THOUSANDS OF OTHER YOUNG
MEN, IRVING BERLIN FOUND HIMSELF IN THE ARMY. HIS TALENTS
WERE PUT TO WORK QUICKLY. HE WROTE, DIRECTED AND PERFORMED
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IN A SHOW, WHICH EVENTUALLY REACHED BROADWAY. / IT WAS CALLED
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"YIP, YIP, YAPHANK", NAMED AFTER THE ARMY CAMP WHERE HE WAS
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STATIONED AT THE TIME. / IT INCLUDED SUCH MEMORABLE TUNES

VOICE: AS "OH, HOW I HATE TO GET UP IN THE MORNING", AND "MANDY".
CONT'D) IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR, A CIVILIAN IRVING BERLIN WAS AGAIN
CALLED UPON TO WRITE A MUSICAL FOR THE ARMED SERVICES. HE
RESPONDED WITH "THIS IS THE ARMY" -- AND GOT YOUNG JOSHUA
D P T LOGAN TO HELP HIM WITH IT. TO THIS DAY, LOGAN SAYS HE
HIMSELF CONTRIBUTED VERY LITTLE TO THE SHOW, WHICH BECAME
A BIG BROADWAY HIT AND LATER A MOTION PICTURE. AND IN THE
MOVIE, IN A BIT OF NOSTALGIA, THERE WAS FORMER ARMY SERGEANT
IRVING BERLIN, WEARING AN OLD WORLD WAR ONE ARMY UNIFORM,
SINGING A SONG FROM HIS EARLIER ARMY SHOW -- "OH, HOW I
HATE TO GET UP IN THE MORNING."

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- BERLIN SINGING "OH, HOW I...ETC." - FADE OUT AS
DESIRED -- TOTAL CUT 2:00

VOICE: THROUGH THOSE EARLY YEARS, IRVING BERLIN WROTE THE COMPLETE
SCORES FOR SEVERAL HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL BROADWAY MUSICALS, HE
BECAME A CORPORATION, WITH HIS OWN MUSIC PUBLISHING FIRM.
HE BUILT THE FAMOUS MUSIC BOX THEATER IN NEW YORK CITY.
HE BECAME A MILLIONAIRE MANY TIMES OVER. BUT HE DIDN'T
STOP WRITING SONGS. IN 1933, HE WAS IN HOLLYWOOD TO WRITE
THE MUSIC FOR HIS FIRST FILM, "TOP HAT", STARRING FRED
ASTAIRE AND GINGER ROGERS. FRED ASTAIRE WAS TO APPEAR IN
SEVERAL PICTURES SCORED BY IRVING BERLIN. HERE THE DANCER
RECALLS HIS LONG ASSOCIATION WITH THE SONGWRITER.

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- ASTAIRE

"IT'S A LOT OF FUN THINKING ABOUT THOSE WONDERFUL IRVING
BERLIN PICTURES WE DID TOGETHER. OF COURSE, WELL, EVEN
WITHOUT MUSIC IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A PRIVILEGE WORKING WITH
GINGER (ROGERS). BUT I'M SURE YOU'LL AGREE THAT THE BERLIN
SCORES FOR PICTURES LIKE -- OH, FOR EXAMPLE, 'TOP HAT', WITH
SONGS LIKE 'CHEEK TO CHEEK', AND 'THE PICCOLINO'. THESE
THINGS ADDED A NEW DIMENSION TO MY SONG AND DANCE WORK, NO

TAPE:
(CONT'D) QUESTION ABOUT THAT.

"AND THEN CAME 'FOLLOW THE FLEET', 'CAREFREE', 'EASTER PARADE', AND THEN WITH BIG CROSBY, 'HOLIDAY INN' AND 'BLUE SKIES'. THESE WERE ALL IRVING BERLIN SHOWS, YOU KNOW. IRVING IS VERY VERY MUCH A PART OF EVERYTHING THAT WE EVER DO, AND ANY MUSIC, YOU KNOW -- I MEAN, HE GETS RIGHT IN THERE WITH THE MAKING OF ANY -- OF THE WHOLE PICTURE, THE PLOT AND THE SCENERY AND THE COSTUMES AND EVERYTHING. AND THE DANCING. HE JUST -- HE DANCES MENTALLY. BUT HE HAS HAD MANY SUGGESTIONS FOR NUMBERS (DANCE ROUTINES) WHICH INSPIRED THINGS FROM MY STANDPOINT OF THE CHOREOGRAPHY AND THAT SORT OF THING, AND THEN ON THE OTHER HAND I'VE OFTEN ASKED IRVING TO DO A CERTAIN THING, IF I HAD AN IDEA FOR A DANCE. I'D ASK HIM TO WRITE SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR IT, WHICH OF COURSE, HE DID. AND HOW." (1:10)

VOICE: FRED ASTAIRE, WHO WOULD BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT HE'S A FAR BETTER DANCER THAN HE IS A SINGER, NEVERTHELESS SAYS THE SONGS HE ENJOYED SINGING MORE THAN ANY OTHERS WERE THOSE WRITTEN BY IRVING BERLIN. SUCH AS THIS ONE, WHICH HE SANG IN THE FILM "TOP HAT". "ISN'T IT A LOVELY DAY TO BE CAUGHT IN THE RAIN?"

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TAPE: CUT SIX -- ASTAIRE -- "ISN'T IT A LOVELY DAY" - CAN BE FADED AS DESIRED - TOTAL CUT 1:16 (

VOICE: IN 1954, U.S. PRESIDENT DWIGHT EISENHOWER AWARDED IRVING BERLIN THE PRESTIGIOUS MEDAL OF FREEDOM, ONE OF THE HIGHEST AWARDS GIVEN TO AMERICAN CIVILIANS. SHORTLY AFTER THAT, MISTER BERLIN SPOKE TO THE VOICE OF AMERICA.

TAPE:: CUT SEVEN -- BERLIN

"IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ME TO SAY HOW I FEEL ABOUT AMERICA. I CAME HERE AS AN IMMIGRANT, AND WHATEVER SUCCESS I HAVE HAD I OWE TO MY ADOPTED COUNTRY. IN SHORT, SOME YEARS AGO I WAS ASKED IN AN INTERVIEW WHAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION I EVER HAD TO MAKE, AND I SAID, 'I DIDN'T MAKE THAT DECISION. IT WAS MADE BY MY FATHER AND MOTHER WHEN THEY DECIDED TO BRING ME FROM RUSSIA TO AMERICA'.
"I HAVE TRIED TO EXPRESS MY FEELINGS IN A SONG THAT I WROTE SOME YEARS AGO, WHICH IS CLOSER TO ME THAN ANY I HAVE EVER WRITTEN. IT IS NOT ALONE A SONG, BUT AN EXPRESSION OF MY GRATITUDE TO THE COUNTRY THAT INSPIRED IT. THE SONG

TAPE: IS CALLED 'GOD BLESS AMERICA'." (TAPE SEGUES TO MUSIC - EST.
(CONT'D) :10 & UNDER)

VOICE: (OVER MUSIC) AND HERE IS THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF THAT SONG,
INTRODUCED IN 1938 BY SINGER KATE SMITH.

TAPE: UP FULL - SMITH

"AND NOW, IT'S GOING TO BE MY GREAT -- VERY GREAT PRIVILEGE --
TO SING FOR YOU A SONG THAT'S NEVER BEEN SUNG BEFORE BY
ANYBODY. ONE THAT WAS WRITTEN ESPECIALLY FOR ME BY ONE
OF THE GREATEST COMPOSERS IN THE MUSIC FIELD TODAY. IT'S
SOMETHING MORE THAN A SONG. I FEEL IT'S ONE OF THE MOST
BEAUTIFUL COMPOSITIONS THAT WAS EVER WRITTEN, A SONG THAT
WILL NEVER DIE. THE AUTHOR, MISTER IRVING BERLIN. THE TITLE,
'GOD BLESS AMERICA'."

TOTAL CUT 2:52 - ENDS WITH APPLAUSE-CAN BE FADED OUT AS
DESIRED

VOICE: IRVING BERLIN DONATED ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE SONG "GOD BLESS
AMERICA" TO THE BOY SCOUTS AND GIRL SCOUTS OF AMERICA. AT
THE BEGINNING OF 1978, THOSE PROCEEDS AMOUNTED TO ALMOST
SIX-HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR THOUSAND DOLLARS. THEY WILL
CONTINUE TO GROW FOR AS LONG

TAPE: CUT EIGHT -- SNEAK IN UNDER - "SAY IT WITH MUSIC"

VOICE: AS THE SONG IS PLAYED OR SUNG.
(CONT'D)

FRANCE AWARDED IRVING BERLIN ITS "LEGION OF HONOR";
HOLLYWOOD GAVE HIM AN ACADEMY AWARD FOR HIS SONG "WHITE
CHRISTMAS"; THERE HAVE BEEN HONORARY DEGREES FROM SEVERAL
UNIVERSITIES. THAT ISN'T BAD FOR ONE WHO NEVER HAD A MUSIC
LESSON IN HIS LIFE AND WHO NEVER LEARNED TO READ MUSIC;
WHO COULD PLAY THE PIANO -- AND STILL DOES -- IN ONLY ONE
KEY (F-SHARP). IRVING BERLIN SAYS HE FOUND THAT HE WROTE
SIMPLE SONGS BECAUSE -- IN HIS WORDS -- "...THAT'S HOW
THEY CAME OUT OF MY HEAD".

VOICE: AND TODAY, AT THE AGE OF NINETY, HE IS STILL WRITING. IN FACT, HE SAYS HE'D LIKE TO DO ANOTHER MUSICAL PRODUCTION. DESPITE HIS AGE, HE SAYS, "I'M IN EXCELLENT SHAPE -- ESPECIALLY FOR A SONGWRITER, STAYING UP SO LATE AT NIGHT FOR SO MANY YEARS. ALL IN ALL, I'M AGREEABLY SURPRISED AT MYSELF."

JEROME KERN, ANOTHER GREAT SONG WRITER, PUT IT ANOTHER WAY. WHEN ASKED ABOUT IRVING BERLIN'S PLACE IN AMERICAN MUSIC, KERN REPLIED, "IRVING BERLIN HAS NO PLACE IN AMERICAN MUSIC. HE IS AMERICAN MUSIC."

TAPE: UP FULL -- TOTAL CUT :58

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO THE AMERICAN SONGWRITER,
D P T IRVING BERLIN, WHO IS NINETY YEARS OLD TODAY. YOUR HOST HAS
BEEN -----, AND I AM-----.

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BML/RCS